

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Trends in cultural tourism

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#### ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to reflect on the characteristics of the growth of world tourism and its relationship with the development of cultural tourism. The coming years will be marked by a steady increase in visitors, with diverse demographic, geographic, functional and cultural profiles. Under the paradigm that cultural tourism should contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all those involved, this paper proposes different lines of action that contribute to the sustainability of the cultural and tourism sector. The paper addresses other trends such as the need for balance between marketing and planning, the collective construction of tourist images, the current importance of intangible heritage or the growing presence of new technologies in all aspects of cultural tourism.

**Keywords:** cultural tourism; cultural heritage; trends; demand; sustainable tourism

## 1. Introduction

For a long time, academia has considered cultural tourism as a form of alternative tourism. At the beginning of the 21st century, Santana Talavera predicted a vertiginous growth of this segment. He differentiated between direct (minority) and indirect (mass) cultural tourists. However, we can hardly continue to speak of niche tourism when more and more heritage sites are saturated by volumes of tourists who, with more or less interest in aspects of identity and learning, crowd the streets of historic centers, form crowded files to access fashionable exhibitions or mark one more notch on their particular list of UNESCO sites. Even that tourism, more specialized, that shows curiosity, is eager for knowledge and genuine interest in the host culture in all its forms, becomes a mass upon arrival at certain heritage sites ravaged by over-tourism.

The destinations most vulnerable to these excesses are not necessarily cities, but coasts, islands, and rural heritage sites<sup>[1]</sup>. Meanwhile, other cultural destinations, activated to take advantage of the economic promise of tourism, languish in the face of lack of interest<sup>[2]</sup>. According to different studies between 5 and 10% of travelers can be considered 'cultural specific tourists' while between 40 and 50% is the percentage of tourists who participate in cultural activities<sup>[3]</sup>. This same study reports a faster growth of cultural tourism than the rest of tourism (4.5% per year respect to 3.9% of the overall growth). Based on surveys and interviews conducted by UNWTO on synergies between the cultural sector and the tourism industry, physical heritage remains the main pole of tourist attraction, however there is a strong tendency to value intangible heritage and contemporary and creative culture, presenting interesting possibilities for development as its activation is more flexible and economic<sup>[4]</sup>. However, it also presents new challenges, the cultural nature of these experiences requires greater attention to both the values that are proposed to be transmitted to the visitor (how the messages

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are created, what stories they represent, legitimate ownership of these stories, etc.) and the effect that these narratives have on the public, as they play a fundamental role in the construction of significates the cultural values of who receives them<sup>[5]</sup>.

In an interconnected and changing world, it is important to reflect on global tourism trends and their implications for the cultural and heritage sector. The objective of this article is to analyze the growth of the tourism sector, the main changes in demand and the response that is being given to these changes from the tourism and cultural sector. It then reflects on some of the key aspects for the sustainable future of cultural tourism, such as the commercialization of culture, the image of destinations or the trends affecting intangible heritage, always under the premise that tourism should not only promote economic growth but also improve people's quality of life.

## 2. Cultural tourism: An evolving concept

Cultural tourism as a social phenomenon and motif of study arose as a result of the Edinburgh Festival of 1947, when in the midst of the post-war period, Europe, devastated and divided by World War II, began to see tourism as a formula for economic recovery and social reconstruction through cultural exchange<sup>[6]</sup>. Since then, cultural tourism has not stopped growing, constituting in 2017 more than 39% of international arrivals and about 5% of academic publications on tourism<sup>[7]</sup>. Among the wide scientific production dedicated to cultural tourism we find manuals and monographs<sup>[8-13]</sup>, compilations<sup>[14-20]</sup>, reports from international agencies<sup>[3,21]</sup>, and influential academic articles<sup>[22-28]</sup>. Other, more recent, texts survey the construction of knowledge around the topic<sup>[5,7,29]</sup>.

Despite the extensive literature focused on cultural tourism, its definition is still under constant debate as it is a complex and multifaceted concept, which as explained by McKercher and du Cros<sup>[30]</sup> has “almost as many definitions as there are cultural tourists”. In September 2017, during the UNWTO General Assembly session held in Chengdu, China, a new definition of cultural tourism was adopted:

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the essential motivation of the visitor is to learn, discover, experience and consume tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourist destination.

These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional characteristics of a society encompassing arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions<sup>[3]</sup>.

The definitions linked to the material legacy are left behind, mainly focused on tangible historical- artistic resources and mostly linked to the power elites. The recent definition shows the new trends in cultural tourism clearly reflecting the importance of the intangible legacy and cultural industries as fundamental components of the offer, and of local communities and native peoples as legitimate heirs of the heritage legacy, transmitters of living culture and, no less important, anfitrións of the cultural visitor. **Table 1** summarizes some of the trends in cultural tourism.

**Table 1.** Cultural tourism trends.

Traditional perspective	New perspectives
Tourism development based on heritage attractiveness	Place-based tourism development, with all its interconnected attributes
Mastery of historical-artistic material heritage	Growing interest in intangible heritage
Concentration of tourism in western countries	Expansion of tourism throughout the world

**Table 1.** (Continued).

Traditional perspective	New perspectives
Activities focused on heritage resources	Interest in cultural experience
Consumption of package tours	Co-creation of the product during the experience
Eurocentric narratives	Decolonization of cultural discourse
Centrality of Western elites	Concern for minorities, indigenous peoples and anonymous citizens
Power in the hands of very few	Democratization and decolonization of power
From the niche market, with high purchasing power and	To the mass market open to many more people (overtourism in some
On the search for the exceptional	In search of the everyday
Top-down planning by government agencies	Prioritizing bottom-up strategies in the development of initiatives
Planning and public management of cultural tourism	Increased presence of the private sector in management (public-private
Interpretation based on information	Experience-based products
Centrally planned promotion strategies	User-generated information

Own elaboration: Garau, 2016; Richards, 2018; Timothy, 2018; UNWTO, 2018<sup>[3,5,7,31]</sup>.

### 3. Tourism to come: Changes in demand

According to forecasts made by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), based on historical data, by 2030 the volume of international tourists will continue to increase globally. Although the growth rate will soften with respect to the last decades, going from an annual increase of 3.9% in the period 1995–2010, to one of 3.3% between 2010–2030, in absolute terms the projections predict an increase of 43 million international arrivals on average per year, compared to 28 million in the previous period. The year 2018 closed with 1.4 billion international arrivals<sup>[32]</sup>, a figure projected by UNWTO for 2020<sup>[33]</sup> so the forecasts could even be moderate.

Another fundamental change lies in the origin of travelers. In contrast to a sustained growth from traditional issuing countries such as Germany, Great Britain, or the United States, we are faced with an unprecedented growth from the Asia-Pacific area. In 1990 just 58.7 million Asian travelers crossed borders, while in 2017 that number had risen to 329.8 million. China in particular continues to stand out among outbound markets. With 149.7 million travelers and spending of \$257.7 billion in 2017, China ranked first in tourism spending, well above the \$135 billion spent by Americans<sup>[32]</sup>.

These figures are directly related to the growth of the middle classes globally. It is estimated that we are only a few years away from more than half of the world's population belonging to affluent social groups, and this increase is occurring in emerging economies, so a shift in the global balance of power is also expected<sup>[34]</sup>. Considering that more people are traveling to nearby destinations and that more and more countries are betting on investing in tourism development, an important part of these new travelers will remain in their closest geographic environment. The increase in visitors will affect emerging economy countries the most, probably surpassing the developed world in number of arrivals around 2020<sup>[32,33]</sup>.

In the advanced economies, however, we will encounter serious saturation problems caused by the ratio of visitors to local population. The ratio in Western Europe is expected to rise from 62 to 114 tourists for every 100 residents and in the Mediterranean area to 104 per 100. This may lead to cases of antagonism and even xenophobia in the relationship between tourists and local societies<sup>[35]</sup>. In some historic centers there are already more tourists than residents and coupled with gentrification processes empty areas of character are generated<sup>[36]</sup>.

With life expectancy of approximately 100 years in Europe and up to 120 in Japan, the perfil of the visitor will change considerably in the coming years. According to Gratton and Scott<sup>[37]</sup> until now age cohorts largely coincided with the fundamental life stages of most individuals (education, employment and retirement) so age segmentation allowed us to understand the life stage of the traveler and consequently many of their needs and desires. However, with a life expectancy of over 100 years, not only will there be an aging population, but we will soon witness a transformation of life stages that will not only suffer a delay in terms of age (entry into the labor market, maternity/paternity, retirement) but will also become much more dynamic and fluid, encountering fundamental occupational and personal changes throughout life (remarriage, return to the classroom, professional turns, etc.).

Globalization is also transited of a new perfil of citizen. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 258 million people currently live in a country different from that of their birth<sup>[38]</sup>. All these people, plus those who at some point in their lives lived in another country, belong to a distinct cultural segment, to whom in the formation of identity, which “is built and transformed throughout our existence”<sup>[39]</sup> cultural elements from different parts of the world have been joining together. These people with a plural identity, as well as the places through which they travel, often require differentiated services and cultural experiences. Cultural and tourism managers need to take these trends into account in order to offer truly significant products for the new identity audiences.

Currently, 14% of migrants are children and are undergoing a process of enculturation between two or more cultures<sup>[38]</sup>. Among them, many of these young people “who have spent a significant part of their developmental years outside of the parents’ culture”<sup>[40]</sup> are known as TCKs (Third Culture Kids or Third Culture Kids), a term popularized in 1999 by Pollok and Van Reken to refer originally to children raised in expatriate worker enclaves. Today the term is used much more openly. According to these authors, TCKs have two fundamental characteristics. They have grown up in a genuinely intercultural world and they live in a state of permanent mobility. These young people, who are increasingly numerous, speak several languages, adapt easily to different cultural environments and are more sensitive to cultural differences. Their identity relates to all the cultures they have been part of, but they do not belong entirely to any of them. In this context, TCKs tend to create their identity ties around other people with similar backgrounds.

Young people in general are changing. The so- called millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation X (born between the late 1990s and the early years of the 21st century) will be key agents in new mobility formats<sup>[34]</sup>. Both cohorts are digital natives, which considerably influences the way they select and consume culture. They have wide-ranging interests and seek first and foremost values of cultural immersion and authentic experience<sup>[41]</sup>. A study on the evolution of hostel and backpacking tourism shows a trend towards slow tourism. Backpackers prefer to visit 1 or 2 destinations in depth on each trip, as opposed to the previous trend of visiting 3 or 4 countries. There are also changes in terms of gender. Seventy-five percent of women between 16 and 23 years old reported having traveled as backpackers or intending to do so, compared to 67% of young people of the same age.

Women are also increasingly daring to travel alone with an increase of 88% in the last four years<sup>[42]</sup>. For their part, the alpha generation (born from 2010 onwards) have the longest life expectancy and will be the most educated generation in history. Currently, despite their youth, they already generate a great influence in the leisure and travel decisions of their families<sup>[43]</sup>, so they represent a fundamental generation for the present and future of cultural tourism.

#### **4. Some responses to the challenge of demand**

Numerous studies focus on the confrontation between residents and visitors without recognizing the

increasing porosity between the two groups<sup>[7]</sup>. This does not limit the attention that needs to be paid to the issues surrounding the overall increase in the number of tourists, the aging population and changing age cohorts, the interests of new generations, and the increasing cultural diversity among both residents and visitors.

The new publics, together with new technologies are generating transformations in tourism, both by the processes of disintermediation and also by the co-production of places and experiences built collaboratively by the multiple agents involved. Fernandes<sup>[44]</sup> analyzes the emergence of the sharing economy, with which new ways of relationship between anfitrión and visitor open up and where the concept of hospitality is transformed. The processes of urban turistification, understood as the cultural, social, economic physical, political and environmental transformations originated by the arrival of tourism in cities, acquire a new dimension. Formal models are broken and tourism opens up to new spaces transforming neighborhoods into dispersed centers of tourist accommodation. In the case of Lisbon, the massive arrival of tourists, coupled with the expulsion of former dwellers due to the modernization of rental systems, is leading to the gentrification and loss of character of traditional neighborhoods such as Alfama<sup>[44]</sup>.

Attention to the carrying capacity of resources, both tangible and intangible, will be one of the keys to their sustainability. Limits to excess load must be physical and cultural, but also perceptual. Individuals share physical space with other visitors, influencing their dynamics and perceptions and also feeling the influence of their behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, understanding and improving the quality of the tourist experience based on the presence and attitude of other users imposes itself as a priority on the agenda of planificators and cultural managers. Despite tourist crowding, some heritage resources do not suffer from problems of physical or cultural overcrowding, due to their intrinsic strength; however, the perception of crowding can generate a sense of overwhelm in the visitor that seriously affects his or her ability to enjoy the experience.

Thanks to new technologies, smart destinations are already collecting information about tourist movements in the city, improving understanding about their behaviors and allowing the inclusion of modifications in management that help improve urban planning<sup>[45]</sup>. Similarly, efforts are being made to understand visitors' choices and perceptions during their visits to heritage resources with the help of computer systems<sup>[46]</sup>. However, it is not enough to collect information from already existing situations, it is also necessary to improve the ability to predict perceptual saturation levels with future scenarios to prevent cultural destinations from reaching saturation levels that may compromise the cultural and tourism experience. An interesting example of perceptual carrying capacity analysis in tourist enclaves was carried out by Mondragón Mejía, Enseñat Soberanis and Blanco Gregor<sup>[47]</sup> in the X'batún cenote in the Mexican Yucatán. Through 6 visual scenarios created with computer-manipulated photographs they measured the level of perceptual acceptance of users, i.e. "the maximum number of individuals a tourist is willing to see in a given area before their level of satisfaction begins to decrease"<sup>[47]</sup>. Considering that acceptable levels of crowding depend on personal social and group variables, social norm curves were included in the analysis, finding variations among the three types of users identified: residents, domestic tourists and international tourists. The latter are the ones who showed a lower level of acceptance to crowding, while local residents expressed having it higher.

The cultural diversity indicated in this study is also found in other contexts of cultural tourism management. Shedding light on the processes of commodification of intangible heritage, Io<sup>[48]</sup> surveyed 500 international visitors to the Cantonese opera in Macau to understand how to improve the processes of marketing and promotion of traditional performing arts. Through the evaluation of intrinsic and experiential attributes of the activity, participants showed that geographic and cultural distances significantly influenced their perception of the activity, with distance being directly proportional to the attractiveness they felt for Cantonese opera. Against a backdrop of increasing cultural diversity, both in terms of the origin of visitors and the multicultural characteristics of the residents themselves, heritage destinations need a better

understanding of diversity in order to respond appropriately to an increasing range of attitudes and sensitivities.

On the other hand, more inclusive tourism will require paying special attention not only to cultural diversity but also to functional, ideological or intellectual diversity. The approaches of “universal design” or design for all are imposed both in the planning of infrastructures and in the generation of contents. This concept is based on the idea of simplifying the use of resources in order to, without the need for adaptations or special designs, facilitate the enjoyment of the experience to any visitor, regardless of their personal requirements<sup>[49]</sup>. Functional diversity is not the problem of a few. It is estimated that 30% of the population needs accessible infrastructures and that practically the entire population will suffer some type of disability, at one time or another, throughout their lives. To meet this challenge, it will be necessary to create environments and cultural products where the visitor can enjoy the tourism experience with independence, autonomy, equity and dignity<sup>[50]</sup>. Collaboration between agents is also shown to be the fundamental key to the development of accessible tourism for all<sup>[51]</sup>.

In terms of new audiences, we find that, compared to the consumption of objects, the younger generations show a growing interest in the consumption of experiences. Digital natives live the three stages of the tourist trip (pre-trip, trip and post- trip) in relation to new technologies. Social networks are presented as the main source of information in the preparations for the trip, but compared to official prescribers, they prefer content generated by other users. Virtual reality, the internet of things, electronic guides, QR codes, applications on cell phones become key to heritage interpretation and content dissemination and will be fundamental in the co-creation of cultural experiences. Post-travel joins travel for this segment, by sharing their experiences in real time and thus becoming prescribers and co- producers of the future experiences of their peers<sup>[31,41]</sup>.

## 5. Planning vs marketing

To achieve the sustainability of cultural tourism, it is necessary to review, from planning and management, the way in which the different lines of action are prioritized. Some sources point to a trend towards a greater understanding of the importance of DMOs (Destination Management Offices) as destination managers and not only as departments dedicated to promotion and marketing<sup>[52,53]</sup>. However, data coming from the various governments participating in the UNWTO study on cultural tourism<sup>[3]</sup> point in another direction. The top priority of the participating states continues to be product creation and marketing, followed by diversification and only after that, balancing resource protection with the promotion of culture. Eighty-five percent of survey participants reported having specific cultural tourism marketing and promotion plans or sections dedicated to cultural marketing within more general plans; even four countries, where cultural tourism is not considered a priority within their policies, reported having specific marketing plans for cultural tourism. However, 37% still do not have any measurement system to help understand cultural tourism that can inform planning, promotion and management strategies.

In the same study, 61 experts were asked to try to identify the current needs and future priorities of the sector. For the experts, the development of policies with comprehensive and inclusive approaches to culture and tourism and with empowerment and inclusion of local communities are priorities. They also point to the importance of product development as a key to the future, but for its creation they emphasize the aspects of cooperation, promotion of networks and development of skills and training, as opposed to the aspects of promotion and marketing alluded to by government participants.

This commercial approach means that often, in practice, the product concept is limited to marketing aspects, where there is significant brand development (corporate image, media plan, etc.), but little attention is paid to the design of the elements that favor the identity, cultural and tourism experience. Strategies aimed at

selling airline seats and hotel beds instead of building image and reputation for the community and the destination<sup>[54]</sup>.

That is, while experts continue to insist on the need for planning, governments continue to focus their efforts on marketing and commercialization. Despite the various declarations firmadas by the UNWTO on tourism and culture, the principles of sustainable development, and the voices of experts, the messages continue to fail to sink in and governments continue to neglect reasons. There is a clear governmental interest in cultural tourism, interest in promoting, developing and diversifying it, to recover urban and rural areas, but the strategies to achieve the objectives are not always adequate. Among the countries participating in the UNWTO report<sup>[3]</sup>, numerous examples of good practices are given, but there is still a lot of ground to cover. There seems to be a direct relationship between the attention that governments pay to cultural tourism and the growth of the sector. However, the data do not allow us to understand whether the greater the attention, the greater the growth or whether, when there is an increase in cultural tourism in a state, the government begins to pay more attention to it.

## 6. The collective construction of the tourist image

Communication and marketing actions are still important. The results indicate that countries with specific marketing strategies attract more cultural tourists, but it should not be forgotten that the cultural market is not homogeneous. It is necessary to pay attention to segments, niches and interest groups, which in addition now, are much more flexible, as there is a greater tendency to consume different forms of culture during leisure time. This is what Richards<sup>[55]</sup> has called omnivorous consumption, where tourists combine visits to heritage resources and museums with popular culture activities, such as comic book fairs or pop music shows. The improvement of information collection systems will result in a better understanding of the different forms of consumption, allowing the development of brands and products suited to the needs of the new markets. Measuring both the motivations that drive visitors and the cultural activities carried out are key to understanding how to attract tourists, but also to developing policies and operations that are better suited to the needs of residents. Communication and marketing must, moreover, be aimed at cultural awareness and respect, so important for the preservation and safeguarding of heritage. Planned communication exercises should pay attention to other factors that affect the image of destinations. Image, is a social construct and as such, is abstract and sometimes stereotyped. In the globalized era, the reputation and notoriety of a place depend to a large extent on its collective image. Throughout history, territories have created, projected and sustained images that have crystallized in public opinion. These traditional symbolic constructions of the destination can facilitate or hinder the promotional development of the destination. Dias Oliveira<sup>[56]</sup> shows in a study on the Serra da Estrela that cultural and symbolic constructions prior to the arrival of modern tourism are strongly maintained. This important mountain range, the highest in Portugal, has historical, cultural and natural resources capable of satisfying demand throughout the year. However, the Portuguese tourist maintains an image of the destination linked to winter. Despite communication and advertising efforts, the agencies responsible for tourism promotion have not yet managed to consolidate a new image.

Also in Portugal, Santana and Joukes<sup>[57]</sup> analyze the contents of 22 Alto Douro tourist guides published on paper between 1941 and 2013 trying to identify the discursive characteristics of these influential promotional texts. The authors or sponsors of the editorial production construct their discourse by creating images that align with the commercial interests of the destination. That is, through travel books they impose their subjective points of view with the intention of attracting the potential visitor. Following the classification developed by Santana Talavera<sup>[58]</sup> for the construction of images, he identifies an evolution in the discourses, from a look based mainly on the “cognitive component”, that is, mental images based on the physical attributes

of heritage, its materiality towards a greater presence of the “affective component”, which is that which is developed in combination with the appreciations and feelings that heritage generates in the tourist.

In the tourism system, the image is, for Santana Talavera<sup>[58]</sup> “practically, the item that configures the destination and determines to a large extent the satisfaction and the tourist memory” and what is more, when these images are shaped out of context, over time, they can even influence in the formation of local identities. Hence the importance of the “image built for sale” being shaped in a participatory process among the agents directly involved in the destination. Likewise, it is increasingly necessary to consider the “affective component”, that which is constructed from the tourist’s perspective. The most valued sources of information for the construction of the image are the visit itself and the opinions of friends and acquaintances<sup>[56]</sup>. At a time when social interactions have found a new context of expression, influence and decision through new technologies<sup>[59]</sup>, cultural tourists acquire a leading role in the construction of images, unknown in previous stages, becoming co-creators of cultural production.

The visitor’s own cultural characteristics significantly affect expectations about the destination and the images that are constructed during the trip. Gómez Aragón and Agudo Torrico<sup>[60]</sup> aware that the values assigned by visitors do not always coincide with those promoted by the destination, analyze the social imaginaries of Japanese tourists and their consumption of the Andalusian cultural landscape. They discover that certain idiosyncratic characteristics of the Japanese people, built by years of “identity uneasiness” lead to the nostalgic search for an idyllic, traditional and romantic landscape that is reflected in a differentiated tourist consumption that moves away from the offer proposed by the Andalusian destinations. A particular cultural product is thus created, where spaces, scenarios and interpretations are selected to respond to the anticipated imaginary of a public that will return to their country with an image of the “authentic” Andalusian landscape, very different from that of other visitors.

## **7. Intangible heritage at the heart of the development of cultural tourism**

The most pronounced change we are witnessing is the growing interest in intangible cultural manifestations. As a concept, “intangible heritage” hardly appeared in tourism programming until the beginning of this century, however it is, increasingly, dominating the articulation of the cultural offer in all destinations<sup>[61]</sup>. With this progressive interest, the referents to be activated increase, and the territory itself becomes patrimonialized through cultural landscapes, where the space becomes a cultural asset<sup>[60]</sup>. In these activation processes the viability problems raised by Prats<sup>[2]</sup> become very present. An excessive optimism about cultural resources, leads politicians and local development agencies to opt for tourism as a way of salvation for the depopulation of rural spaces or the transformation of industrial landscapes, without considering the difficulties of economic viability or the impacts that these activations entail. In this process, intangible heritage plays a fundamental role in diversifying and generating added value, since the activation of intangible resources is generally less costly than the recovery of physical heritages, but it is not free of contradictions. Hiriart Pardo and Barrera Sánchez<sup>[62]</sup> work on the danger of trivialization that political and mercantile interests can impose on certain types of heritage, such as religious heritage. Analyzing the pastoral visit of Pope Francis to the city of Morelia, they pose a reflexion on the different visions that, in the Mexican context, are held of spiritual tourism. Religious mega-events of these characteristics awaken conflicting interests among the agents involved. In traditionally Catholic countries, the visits of the hierarch of the Catholic Church are events of great social relevance, with wide media coverage and marked political interest. In the case of Morelia, the pastoral visit was used by the government as just another tourist product, without understanding the symbolic implications that this type of event has for the local population. The press released felely the touristic and commercial interest that the mega-event had for the political authorities, paying little attention to



the spiritual issues. The failure of the tourist proposals shows us that mega- events of a religious nature should not be confused with massive events or easily cosificable spectacles and that they require a deeper social analysis.

Roigé, del Marmol and Guil<sup>[61]</sup> raise the contradiction of the current heritage process based on intangible resources, where “the objectives of “conservation” and “preservation of heritage” clash head-on with the creations and reinventions generated according to the consumption needs of the cultural tourist. The ambivalent relationship between intangible heritage and tourism development is for these authors an indissoluble relationship that feeds back on itself. The symbolic charge of heritage is redefined in relation to tourism, while tourism uses the cultural images of the intangible to generate attractive destinations. In their analysis of heritage activations in the Catalan Pyrenees they identify five trends: (1) materialization of intangible heritage in museums and monuments, (2) festive revitalization with processes of symbolic reassignment of traditional festivities, reactivation of semi-forgotten events and creation of new ones, (3) revaluation of local agricultural production through artisanal food production, (4) idealization of rural society through the construction of stereotypical images of rusticity, and (5) promotion of the spiritual values of nature in national and natural parks.

Sometimes the intangible value serves to confer an aura of authenticity to products created for tourist consumption. Such is the case of the archaeologically inspired handicrafts of indigenous producers in the Brazilian Amazon<sup>[63]</sup>. In their workshops, artisans sell their product accompanied by a discourse of ethnic-historical continuity with the ancient dwellers of pre-colonial places. Such continuity is scientifically impossible, since the peoples linked to those ceramics became extinct before European colonization. However, these invented practices bring symbolic and cultural value to the handcrafted reproductions that generate added value for the visitor. This activation, although invented, represents a unique and rich tourist experience for travelers, an improved source of income for the artisans and an enhancement of the archaeological heritage that, although highly debatable, contributes to the conservation of historical resources.

Among the mechanisms to get heritage and tourism discourses and practices more aligned are the multilateral agreements linked under the auspices of UNESCO. Jiménez de Madariaga and Seño Asencio<sup>[64]</sup> analyze the weight of the UNESCO “brand” in the tourism success of intangible heritage resources. The revitalization of the traditional knowledge of artisanal lime in Morón de la Frontera, in Seville, was considered in 2011 as an example of Good Practices for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. Despite the lack of consistency in the use of the brand for tourism purposes and the scarcity of accommodation infrastructure in the town, tourist activity in Morón has increased, and more importantly, the UNESCO brand has served to reinforce the enhancement of lime as a quality product for the restoration of historical heritage and as a sign of identity for the local inhabitants.

However, the main guarantors of the proper safeguarding of heritage should be the local communities themselves. A good example of the use of heritage in all its variants for tourism is that carried out by the indigenous communities of the Sierra Norte de Oaxaca, Mexico. Through different community ventures, for more than two decades, these communities have been able to reorient their economy towards alternative tourism based on the cultural and natural wealth bequeathed by their ancestors. Palomino and López<sup>[65]</sup> examine the trajectories of these social entrepreneurship projects that stand out for their exercise of communality, a specific form of governance based on a collectivist management tradition, and resilience, demonstrated in their capacity for adaptation and cultural resistance.

## 8. Conclusion

Cultural tourism is no longer a niche interest for the few, but a powerful attraction for demand. Global mobility trends point to a growth in tourism in general and cultural tourism in particular, which will bring new

pressures and demands to the sector. In a social context where diversity among both residents and visitors is the norm, the “culture of encounter” becomes much more complex. The social impacts, which are greater the greater the cultural distance between the visitor and the visited, will be key aspects to take into account on the road to the sustainability of tourism in cultural destinations.

In addition, it should be remembered that tourism does not always achieve the economic returns that are assumed. The visible costs of activations<sup>[2]</sup>, coupled with the “hidden costs” of visitor management (waste management, energy and water consumption, social capital, etc.) often exceed the benefits obtained at the community level<sup>[66]</sup>. Therefore, at the core of the necessary synergies between tourism and culture should be the general needs of residents and also those of tourists, considering the latter as temporary residents of cultural destinations, i.e., as an integral part of the development model.

New technologies are entering with force and their presence will be even more omnipresent in the future of the sector. Their use makes it possible to understand the behaviors and needs of tourist flujos on the territory, helping to establish the limits of acceptable change at the three levels: physical, cultural and perceptual. They are transforming the intermediation model and generating the dispersion of tourism within the urban fabric. They empower visitors to generate content, which influence in turn in the creation of the destination’s images. They facilitate the interpretation of resources through the multiple formats and channels available (QR codes, virtual reality, augmented reality, internet of things, etc.) which allows the simultaneous incorporation of history, material and immaterial culture, identity, genius loci and people’s lives into the narratives.

These are just some of the changes brought about by new technologies. The technological revolution is still in its infancy and it will be necessary to monitor digital innovations and their use by citizens and tourists in order to incorporate all their advantages into the planning and management of cultural tourism.

The OECD<sup>[34]</sup> identifies 4 megatrends with marked impacts on tourism in 2040: (1) evolution of demand, (2) sustainable growth, (3) new technologies and, (4) new mobilities. This article addresses aspects of cultural tourism under the four trends. There remain, however, other topics of great interest that will mark the future development of cultural tourism such as, to mention a few, the training of specialized professionals, the attraction of talent for careers in cultural tourism, the education of tourists, the new frontiers of cultural tourism, such as underwater tourism, the creation of replicas such as the Altamira or Lascaux parks to protect heritage from over-tourism, etc. All of this, from an inclusive and integrative perspective, since “for communities to be admired, they need a sense of belonging and a purpose to do amazing and imaginative things that suit their character and captivate others”<sup>[67]</sup>.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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